

On the Political Progress of Japanese Bourgeoisie
as seen through the Chamber of
Commerce (Shohokaigisho)

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The first Chamber of Commerce in Japan was established in Tokyo in 1878 (Meiji 11) and was called Tokyo shohokaigisho. After that the same kind of institution was established one after another in many cities, and before long most larger cities in this country had come to have a chamber of commerce. These chambers of commerce functioned as a consultative body for the government on one hand and as a representative body for the bourgeoisie on the other hand, so we can see the process of the political progress of bourgeoisie in this country by inquiring into the activities of these chambers. In short, they did not grow up as a democratic power against the absolute government, but grew up only as a ministerial power. Accordingly the government gave out the Act of Chamber of Commerce (Shogyokaigisho Jorei) in 1890 (Meiji 23), expecting the chambers of commerce to cover its flank against attacks of the Imperial Diet which was to be opened in the same year.

When we want to study a political party and its development in this country, I think it is important for us to consider on these characters of Japanese bourgeoisie preceding the establishment of the Imperial Diet.